

25th October 2024

Dear Families

We have finally made it to half term! This term always seems so long. I have been delighted with the way that children have engaged with their learning and thinking hard. They have also responded extremely well to our focus on taking responsibility for their own behaviour by making the right choices. This has been sustained throughout the term, even as everyone got very tired this week. School has felt good this half term and I look forward to that continuing throughout November and December.

We started this week with a fire drill on Monday. This was extremely impressive as we evacuated the whole school in 4.5 minutes. Years 7 to 10 have been completing their cross country runs this week and I was impressed at their resilience! The top six boys and girls in each year group have been invited to represent the school in the Milton Keynes cross country event at Campbell Park next half term. Please do bring those reply slips back to the PE office. Year 8s have enjoyed careers workouts this week and enjoyed thinking about potential roles for the future and the skills required. I am grateful to the vast numbers of businesses and employers who continue to support our children during these sessions. This week we have also hosted our final parents tour on a Friday morning and held our first tour for families with children who have SEND. We have enjoyed showcasing our school in action this half term.

Yesterday afternoon we hosted the staff from all Catholic schools in Milton Keynes for our annual Academic Mass. It was a lovely opportunity to celebrate the work of our community.

Next week is half term so we all get a very well-deserved rest! Pupils return to school on Monday 4th November. During the first week back, I will be meeting each subject leader to review their curriculum and next steps in the development of this. I am very much looking forward to monitoring our subject provision and learning all about the dynamic schemes of learning that are being planned and implemented. Year 11 begin their PPEs after half term and they last for two weeks. They should be revising over the half term in preparation but please do keep a check for any signs of stress and feeling overwhelmed. Please let the pastoral team know if you have any concerns. Please remind your child that these are a practice and an opportunity to show what they have learnt. Year 11s are invited to have a free breakfast each morning of the examination period to give them the energy to keep going! Teachers will also be completing PC1 after half term ready to share these with you in the next few weeks.

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Congratulations to all those who represented the school in sporting fixtures this week. On Monday Mr Burton took the Year 8 football team to John Hampden in the second round of the county cup. Unfortunately they came up against a very strong team and didn't go through to the next round. It was an excellent learning experience for the boys involved, which we hope they can apply to the remaining league fixtures they have. On Tuesday our Year 10 and 11 netball teams played Hazeley and whilst the girls gave their all and persevered it just wasn't quite enough. That evening Mr Lloyd took the Year 7 and 8 basketball teams over to Shenley Brook End where again we showed resilience, excellent teamwork and we played strongly right until the end, never giving up. On Wednesday evening it was our Year 9 and 10 basketball teams turn to host Shenley Brook End. The Year 9s, like our other teams this week, showed real heart and character out on the court, never giving up and scoring some fantastic baskets. But, on this occasion, Shenley Brook End were just too strong for us and ended up winning the game. Our Year 10s won a very hard fought game which delighted those who stayed behind to watch. Our final fixture of the week saw our Year 11 basketball team travel to Shenley Brook End. This game swung back and forth, with neither team taking control of the game, but fortunately for us, the buzzer went with us 5 points in the lead and grabbing the win. After the game Mr Lloyd said "The team played a hard-fought match with the Shenley supporters cheering their team on, I am pleased we were able to get the win. It was a great advertisement for the sport of basketball."

During the first two weeks back after half term, we will be having our next round of Burditt Cup competitions, all boys' groups will be playing Burditt Cup football, whilst the girls will be playing Burditt Cup netball, please ensure you have the correct kit/footwear for these lessons.

On Monday Year 9 and 10 Horticulture students took part in a bulb planting session at Teardrop Lakes with The Parks Trust. On Friday a group of Year 8s went to Unity Place on a STEM trip.

I remain grateful for the efforts of pupils and families around school attendance. We ask that pupils aim for 97%+ attendance to school over the course of a year but, we understand that this is not always possible for all pupils. 97% attendance equates to approximately 6 days absence in school year. A reminder that although 90% 'sounds good' (we'd all be pleased with that as a test result!) it actually equates to a day absent from school each fortnight, or nearly 4 whole missed weeks of school each academic year. Low levels of attendance or poor punctuality to lessons has a big impact on your child's outcomes from school.

We highly value working in partnership with families. Thank you for making the effort to book routine medical appointments outside of school hours. To enable us to authorise absence requests for medical appointments in school hours efficiently, we ask that you provide appropriate documentary evidence; this might be an appointment letter, email, or text message from a dentist or doctor.

A reminder that school is never able to authorise holiday absences. There are a limited number of exceptional circumstances for which school can authorise absence. Families are asked to make any absence requests in good time ahead of any planned absence. Again, to enable school to process these requests efficiently, we ask that appropriate documentary evidence is included.

If your child takes the number 33 bus you should have seen the message about the change of service. We became aware that, unfortunately, Arriva have made a route change to this bus service and from Sunday 3rd November the 33 will no longer drop off at or pick up from St Paul's. Arriva had not advised

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the school of this change and we are sorry that we could not notify you earlier. We have made a strong complaint to Arriva. If you need to contact Arriva about this their customer service team can be reached on **0344 800 44 11**

Have a lovely half term.

Yours sincerely



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